



# 2203T/2303T – Strategic Conversations for Instructional Leaders

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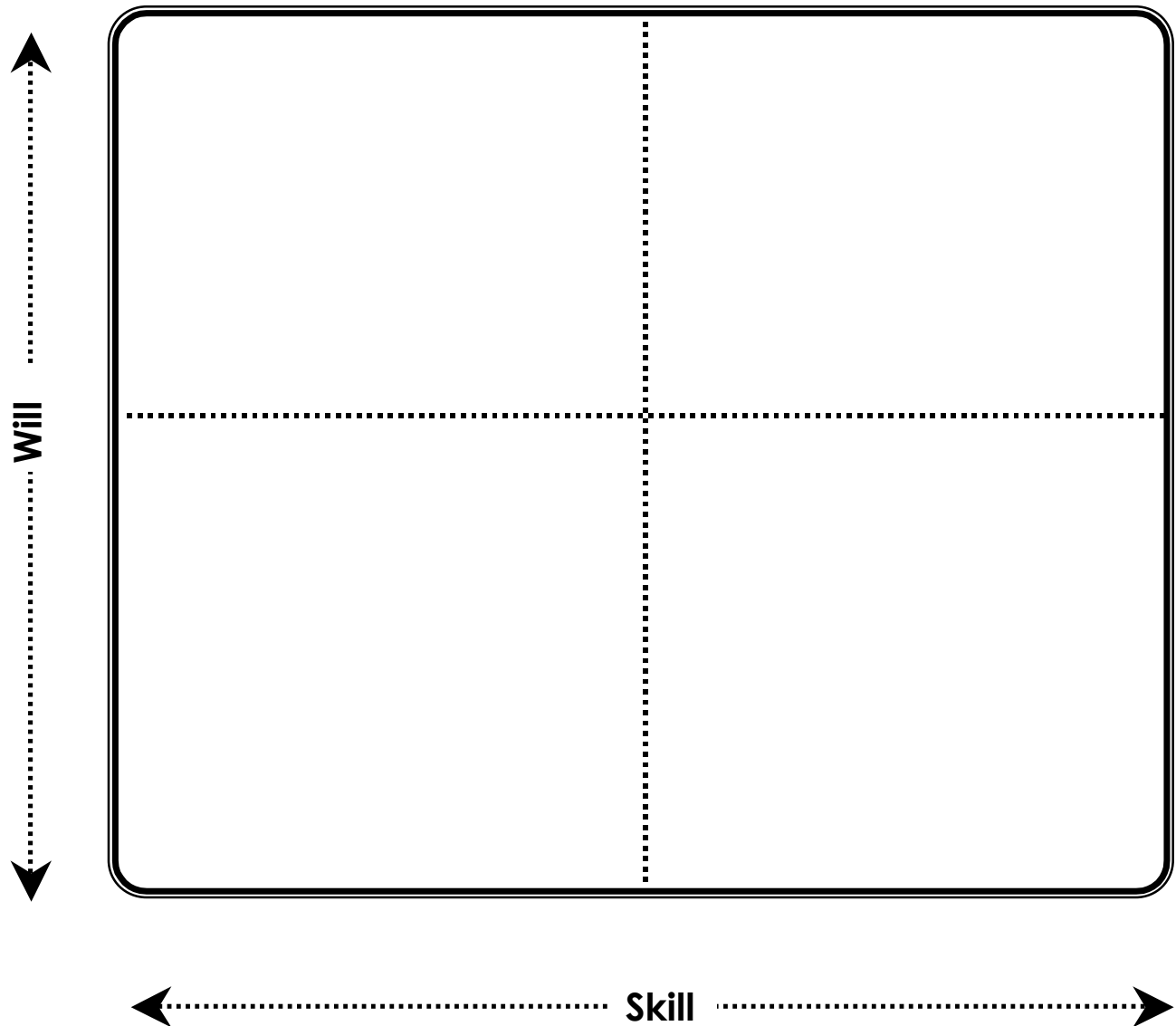
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# Summary of the Four Strategic Conversational Approaches

	Reflecting	Facilitating	Coaching	Directing
<b>Feedback</b>	Feedback is reflective. You are simply summarizing what the teacher is saying.	Feedback is informative and solicited.	Feedback is focused on helping the teacher improve performance. Should be specific and timely.	Feedback provides information on how well the teacher is achieving the goals that were set. Feedback is based on agreed upon criteria.
<b>Problem Identification</b>	Teacher identifies challenge	Teacher identifies challenge	Teacher and leader collaboratively identify challenge	Leader identifies challenge
<b>Solutions</b>	Solutions are identified by the teacher	Solutions are identified by the teacher with some input from the leader	Solutions are collaboratively developed by the teacher and the leader	Solutions are identified by the leader.
<b>Evaluation</b>	The teacher sets the evaluation criteria and evaluates their progress through reflection.	The teacher evaluates his/her own progress and shares this information with the leader	The leader and the teacher evaluate the teacher's progress collaboratively	The leader evaluates the teacher's progress based on agreed upon criteria
<b>Ideal State</b>	The teacher determines the ideal state	The teacher determines the ideal state with input from the leader	The teacher and leader determine the ideal state together	The leader determines the ideal state.
<b>Root Cause</b>	The teacher discovers the root cause through reflection	The leader asks the teacher probing questions in order to help the teacher see the root cause	The leader helps the teacher identify the root cause	The leader identifies the root cause and asks for feedback.
<b>Supports</b>	The teacher identifies the supports he/she needs.	The teacher asks for support and the leader helps identify the types of supports that might meet the teacher's needs.	The leader and the teacher identify areas where the teacher may need support. The leader then suggests supports and the teacher chooses.	The leader asks the teacher what supports he or she might find useful in order to achieve the goal. The leader commits to provide these supports. The teacher commits to using them.
<b>Responses</b>	Make <b>observations</b> that help the teacher look at his or her performance objectively.	Make <b>suggestions</b> that imply that present performance is okay and that the action is optional.	Make <b>recommendations</b> that signal that the teacher must change his or her current behavior but how that change is made is up for discussion. Be sure to follow up to ensure that the change is made.	Communicate <b>expectations</b> that signal that the teacher must change his or her current behavior. Stipulate how it must be done and in what time period.

# The Four Types of Teachers



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**Low Will/ Low Skill:** Low Will/ Low Skill teachers not only struggle with their content area and their pedagogy, but they have little or no motivation to improve. Without either the skill or the will to deliver effective instruction in the classroom, these teachers can do students great harm. Often, it is difficult to understand the kind of negative impact these teachers can have on students. We tend to tolerate Low Will/ Low Skill teachers because they are so difficult to move. Unlike the Low Will/ High Skill teacher who acts as a saboteur and thus can quickly earn our ire, Low Will/ Low Skill teachers do not tend to buck the status quo. Theirs is a more passive resistance to change and as a result, many instructional leaders tend to tolerate them or at best, work around them, and spend their energy focusing on the more troublesome teachers. Low Will/ Low Skill teachers are often assigned remedial classes or other classes that are low profile in the building.

## Strategies for Low Will/ Low Skill Teachers

- Identify which will be easier to tackle first, will or skill, and start there
- Share your passion and commitment for teaching and learning in both formal and informal conversations
- Use multiple sources of data such as lesson plans, student artifacts, student performance on standardized tests and other measures, and both formal and informal observations to identify patterns and gaps in performance
- Use frequent informal observations as a way of holding them accountable
- Give them more challenging assignments, provide them with the necessary support, and then hold them accountable for the work they must do
- Stop enabling LWLS teachers by providing them with a lightened academic load and less challenging assignments.
- Focus on the choices teachers make in the classroom and their impact on students.
- Point out missed opportunities to challenge students, provide more rigor, or otherwise engage students in the classroom.
- Ask to see lesson and unit plans regularly and look for evidence that they are being implemented in the classroom.
- Ask teachers to present evidence of the way in which they keep themselves current in the field and discuss how this learning is evidenced in their instructional practice.
- Conduct a career coaching conversation focused on their aspirations, career goals, and professional achievement goals. Ask teachers to project where they see themselves in five years and how they see their current performance helping them to achieve their goals.
- Conduct frequent informal hallway conversations about teaching and learning.
- Provide directives for improvement.
- Focus some reflective conversations on non-classroom areas of performance such as collaboration with colleagues, professional learning opportunities, and professional duties and responsibilities.

**Low Will/ High Skill:** Low Will/ High Skill teachers have the pedagogical and content area knowledge to be effective teachers; however, they are not motivated to improve their instructional practice and typically have fairly low expectations of their students. They are able but unwilling.

Low Will/ High Skill teachers tend to be the saboteurs in your building. They have the skill set to be effective teachers but for a variety of reasons, refuse to do what is best on behalf of students. They will typically have well-planned lessons and usually have a good grasp of the content but their relationships with their students and their colleagues are often poor. Additionally, these teachers refuse to take ownership of their students' performance and therefore resist feedback

Many Low Will/ High Skill teachers used to be High Will/ High Skill teachers. But, over the years, they may have experienced some disappointment or frustration that has sapped them of their will. The bad news is that many of these teachers have let their frustration turn into cynicism. And, because they may have received positive performance evaluations in the past and therefore may resist your initial efforts at helping them improve.

The good news is that if they were once High Will/ High Skill teachers, they can become High Will/ High Skill teachers again.

### **Strategies for Low Will/ High Skill Teachers**

- Focus on their strengths and arrange their work so that their strengths are maximized.
- Match them to tasks that take advantage of their strengths
- Regularly recognize and celebrate their accomplishments
- Model giving input in a positive manner
- Seek to find a common ground in terms of beliefs on which you can build
- First build rapport, then ask for change
- Try to find out the underlying reasons for the lack of will
- Work to develop ownership rather than buy-in
- Use data to support recommendations
- Use informal observations as a way of building rapport and for initiating conversations about instructional practices and beliefs
- Challenge negative statements by asking the teacher probing questions rather than by expressing outright disagreement. Use reflective conversations to help the teacher see what is wrong with the statement.
- Focus on patterns of behaviors rather than discrete incidents.
- Conduct frequent informal hallway conversations that solicit their teaching beliefs and attitudes
- Conduct frequent, informal hallway conversations about their lives and their concerns.
- Leverage favors.
- Begin with recommendations for improvement but if these are not implemented, move to directives.
- Involve another trusted administrator or supervisor to increase credibility
- Make goal setting a collaborative process.

**High Will/ Low Skill:** High Will/ Low Skill teachers tend to be the newer teachers in the building. Either they have recently graduated from a teacher preparation program or they have come to teaching because they want to make a difference and have taken an alternative certification route. They are excited about teaching and sincerely want to do what is best for their students, but they lack the pedagogical and/or the content area knowledge they need to be effective in the classroom.

The good news is that these teachers are willing to learn. They just need to be pointed in the right direction. Often, they lack experience in the classroom and therefore struggle with classroom management.

The danger with High Will/ Low Skill teachers is that their lofty ideals will sometime lead them to implement strategies that seem to make sense but that actually do students more harm than good. So eager are they to be effective in the classroom that they may try a variety of strategies or activities without giving much thought to whether these strategies or activities actually improve student achievement.

High Will/ Low Skill teachers tend to struggle in three key areas: Lesson planning, classroom management, and content area knowledge.

### **Strategies for High Will/ Low Skill Teachers**

- Share research and best practices focused on the particular instructional strategy or strategies that need to be addressed
- Work with the teacher to develop specific improvement goals and steps in the improvement process
- Celebrate progress towards goals
- Use data to identify areas for improvement and to track progress
- Build professional learning communities to provide support
- Use informal observations as a way of providing quick feedback on progress towards goals
- Provide clear, specific feedback in a structured but collegial context.
- Use exemplars and models of the teaching behaviors and strategies you expect to see
- Establish clear benchmarks for improvement
- Encourage suggestions and alternative ideas from the teacher
- Provide opportunities for self-evaluation as skill set improves.
- Provide directives for improvement at first, but move to recommendations as skill set and knowledge base improves.
- Establish a formal support group facilitated by a master teacher that will allow teachers specific assistance through joint problem solving and an opportunity to learn and practice effective collegial interaction.

**High Will/ High Skill:** High Will/ High Skill teachers are those teachers every leader dreams of having. Not only are they highly motivated and committed to their students' success, but they have the content knowledge and the pedagogical expertise that most likely results in student success. These are your master teachers.

The danger with High Skill/ High Will teachers is that they are often neglected. We tend to spend the lion's share of our efforts with our ineffective teachers and leave the High Skill/ High Will teachers to their own devices. If we are not careful, these teachers can reach professional ennui and just become plain bored.

If that happens, we can quickly lose the teachers we most want to keep. They migrate to new schools or new positions in search of new challenges because we failed to provide them with the challenges that would keep them engaged and motivated to remain in our schools.

### **Strategies for High Will/ High Skill Teachers**

- Publicly recognize their accomplishments and have them share their learning with staff.
- Challenge them to increase their competence in a particular area.
- Actively seek their input in the day-to-day operations of the school.
- Provide them with informal leadership opportunities within the school
- Use informal observations as a way of providing acknowledgement for the work they do.
- Communicate that the work of excellent teachers is never done. Students' needs are constantly evolving and so should their practice.
- Provide opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection.
- Ask them to present their data to you and explain what the data indicates.
- Provide suggestions for improvement.
- Engage them in informal conversations about effective teaching and their own teaching practice.